

city clean such as collection of garbage, desilting of drains, hospital waste to be incinerated in the hospital itself, construction of new dustbins etc.

(g) All corrective measures are being taken on day-to-day basis by the local bodies.

[English]

DOT Probes VSNL Payment

846. SHRI SANAT MEHTA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "DOT probes VSNL payment to Iridium" appearing in "Indian Express", dated May 18, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) Case has been made over to Vigilance Cell for detailed investigations. Necessary action will be taken based on the findings.

Pollution by Fire Crackers

847. SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROIT: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether burning of fire crackers every year have created imbalance in the environment;

(b) if so, whether the Government propose to ban burning to fire crackers in the major cities in view of pollution; and

(c) if so, the steps taken by the Government in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) Bursting of fire crackers/fire works leads to high noise levels and air pollution problems.

(b) and (c) Instructions have been sent to the concerned authorities of the major cities suggesting restrictions on use of fire crackers which produce noise of more than 100 decibels at 4 meter distance. Steps proposed for checking pollution due to fire crackers include consideration of the following :

- (i) Banning of bursting of crackers between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.;
- (ii) Bursting of crackers are to be permitted only during public festivals and in designated areas; and
- (iii) Banning of manufacture and bursting of joined crackers.

Ethylene Oxide - An Environment Hazard

848. SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether sterilisation of medical products and devices which is carried out mainly with ethylene oxide is a serious environmental hazard and sterilisation with ethylene oxide also poses a threat to the workers working in ethylene oxide sterilisation plants;

(b) if so, whether presently there is any provision in India, statutory or otherwise, to prevent the release of ethylene oxide and counter gas in the air after the sterilisation process is over and to protect the workers against the hazards of employment in ethylene oxide plants; and

(c) if not, the steps proposed to be taken to deal with this problem?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) to (c) Sterilisation process by using ethylene oxide takes place in closed circuits and as such the release of this gas is controlled. The ethylene oxide is a toxic gas and its contact may cause irritation of eyes and skin. The tolerance level of 5ppm of ethylene oxide in air has been reported by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, USA. The ethylene oxide is regulated under the explosive Act, 1884 when handled in large quantity.

[Translation]

Appraisal of Programmes

849. SHRI RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have reviewed the programmes like providing uniforms and mid-day meals free of cost to the poor students upto the 8th class;

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government for the implementation of said programmes in Bihar;

(c) the number of districts in Bihar where these programmes are being implemented; and

(d) the details of Central assistance provided to States for these programmes, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MUHI RAM SAIKIA): (a) to (c) The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, popularly known as Mid-day Meals Scheme, was launched on 15th August, 1995. It has been extended to cover students of Primary Classes (I-V) in all the blocks/districts including urban areas in Bihar from 1997-98 studying in Government, Government-Aided and Local Body schools.